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UNDER A CLOUD

less than entirely trustworthy; suspected of some wrongdoing

1. The bank manager discovered that there was money missing from Mr. Jenkins' money drawer, and the manager suspected that Mr. Jenkins took it himself. Mr. Jenkins has been *under a cloud* ever since.
2. This administration has been marked by widespread corruption. Even if they manage to clean it up, the politicians will always be *under a cloud* of suspicion.

The lack of trust implied in the expression may or may not be justified.

UNDER (SOMEONE'S) THUMB

under someone's control

1. Don't ask Margie to make a change in our work schedule; she won't do anything without Larry's permission. She's *under Larry's thumb*.
2. Those two young people will never be allowed to make their own decisions or lead their own lives. Their mother will always control them. They will always be *under their mother's thumb*.

Compare to: *tied to (one's) mother's apron strings*

The expression suggests a dramatic difference between the person in control and the person who is controlled, the latter being so small or so weak as to be held down by a thumb.

UNDER THE TABLE/COUNTER

secretly or illegally

1. It is illegal for storekeepers to sell cigarettes or liquor to children, but some will sell them to children *under the counter*.
2. As a private investigator, I sometimes have to slip someone some money *under the table* in order to get information.

UNDER THE WEATHER

unwell; ill

1. John has not been looking very well these days. He's *under the weather*.
2. The children and I have had so many colds this winter. The whole family has been *under the weather* for weeks.

Antonym: *in the pink*

Whereas *in the pink* can be applied to people, animals, or machines, *under the weather* is applied only to people or animals.

UNDER THE WIRE

just in time before a deadline

1. The newspaper article was due no later than 4 o'clock and the editor got it in at exactly 3:59. He got it in right *under the wire*.
2. The deadline for applying to the university was the last day of March. Rachel procrastinated until it was almost too late, but then she stayed up all night filling out the application and got it in just *under the wire*.

Similar to: *in the nick of time; down to the wire*

UNTIL THE COWS COME HOME

until the end of the day; for a long time

1. When the young boy's mother refused to give him some candy, he started to cry. His mother told him he could cry *until the cows come home*, but he was not going to get any candy.
2. I will never be any good at giving speeches. I could practice *until the cows come home*, but I'll never get over being nervous when I have to stand up in front of a crowd.

The expression relates to herds of cows that graze outdoors during the day and then are brought inside for the night. It means "all day long."

UP IN ARMS

angry or upset

1. When the government raised the price of flour and sugar to the point where people could no longer afford them, the population was *up in arms*. Much of the population stopped work and gathered in the streets to protest.
2. The students were *up in arms* and began to protest against the school administration's policies. They marched on the administration building, carried signs calling for the president's resignation, and listened to speeches by the student leaders.

The expression is often used to describe groups of people rather than individuals. *Arms* refers to weapons. Thus the people are so angry that they are ready to take up weapons (at least figuratively).

UP IN THE AIR

unsettled or undecided

1. Jack wasn't sure whether to go to the university or get a job. His plans were *up in the air*.
2. I'm *up in the air* about remodeling my house or selling it and moving into a bigger one.

UPPER CRUST

the highest level of society, i.e. people who are separated from ordinary people as being elite either by economic or social position, or both

1. Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, and the other members of the English royal family, are members of high society. They are *upper crust*.

2. Only people with lots of money and the right social connections go to that university. It's a school for the *upper crust*.

The expression can be used either as an adjective (sentence 1) or as a noun (sentence 2). Dating to the mid-19th century, this expression comes from the belief that the upper crust of bread was the best or most desirable part.

UPSET THE APPLE CART

to disturb the status quo; to shake up the existing situation

1. Everyone is happy with the situation as it is. If you try to change it, you'll be *upsetting the apple cart*.
2. The new president was installed and immediately *upset the apple cart* by appointing his own people to various positions in the administration.

Similar to: *rock the boat*

Whereas *rock the boat* usually describes a situation in which the people involved do not want a change, *upset the apple cart* can be used to describe any situation. The expression dates back to the Roman Empire and was originally 'upset the cart.' 'Apple' was added by the late 1700s.

UP THE CREEK (WITHOUT A PADDLE)

in a bad situation and unable to proceed; in an awkward position with no easy way out

1. Charles agreed to finish the report for his study group, but then discovered that the books he needed were only available in the library, and the library was closed. He was *up the creek*.
2. The city administrators expected to pay for street repairs from their existing budget but that money ran out when they had to pay for damages caused by unexpected storms. They were *up the creek without a paddle*.

Synonyms: *high and dry*; *leave (someone) in the lurch*

The expression suggests a situation where one is in a canoe on a small river without the means to navigate. It describes a situation in which one wants or needs to proceed but lacks the means.

UP TO SNUFF

meeting the minimum standard requirements; as good as is required

1. The orchestra didn't reach its usual high standard last year but with lots of extra practice this year, it's finally *up to snuff*.
2. I wasn't very happy with the last batch of dresses that came off the assembly line. The buttons fell off easily, the seams were not straight and the quality of the fabric was poor. The dresses really weren't *up to snuff*.

Synonym: *make the grade*

Compare to: *cut the mustard*

USE (ONE'S) WITS

to use one's intelligence, knowledge, or wisdom

1. Her problem is that she always reacts before considering what she should do first. She needs to learn to *use her wits more*.
2. *Use your wits*, boy! The answer is clear when you think about it.